

YOUTH, RESOURCE CONFLICT AND NON-KINETIC PEACEBUILDING IN KADUNA STATE

Strengthening Inclusive and Preventive Approaches to Resource-Based Conflict



A Policy Brief by
Engaging Borders Strategy Research and Development (SRD)
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ABOUT THE DELIMI PROSPER PROJECT

The Delimi PROSPER Project is an eight-month initiative implemented by Engaging Borders Strategy Research and Development (SRD) under the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRING) Programme. The project focuses on addressing resource-based conflict in Kaduna and Plateau States through non-kinetic, community-driven peacebuilding approaches.

Operating at the intersection of youth engagement, digital advocacy, and policy dialogue, the project strengthens local capacity to detect, prevent, and counter divisive narratives linked to competition over land, water, and environmental resources. It places particular emphasis on youth leadership, gender equity, and the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Through Community Peacebuilding Workshops, digital campaigns, Communities of Practice, Peace Public Square engagements, and executive policy dialogues, the project generates practical insights that connect grassroots experiences with state-level decision-making.

The policy briefs in this series synthesise evidence from SPRING-commissioned research alongside youth-generated perspectives captured through project activities, offering policy-relevant options for strengthening preventive and inclusive peacebuilding approaches.

ABOUT ENGAGING BORDERS SRD

Engaging Borders Strategy Research and Development (SRD) is a Nigerian policy and peacebuilding organisation dedicated to advancing evidence-informed, inclusive, and locally grounded approaches to conflict prevention and resilience.

The organisation works at the intersection of research, youth engagement, digital advocacy, and high-level policy dialogue, translating community experiences into practical strategies for government and institutional actors.

Engaging Borders SRD collaborates with state institutions, civil society organisations, security actors, and development partners to design and implement non-kinetic interventions that strengthen social cohesion and democratic accountability.

Through rigorous analysis, structured dialogue platforms, and adaptive learning frameworks, the organisation supports sustainable pathways to peace and resilience in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

DISCLAIMER

This publication was produced under the Delimi PROSPER Project with support from the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRING) Programme, funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

The views and analyses presented in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily

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All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented. However, Engaging Borders SRD accepts no responsibility for errors or omissions.



YOUTH, RESOURCE CONFLICT, AND NON-KINETIC PEACEBUILDING IN KADUNA STATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief examines the evolving dynamics of resource-based conflict in Kaduna State and the strategic role of youth-informed, non-kinetic approaches in strengthening peace and security. Drawing on SPRiNG-commissioned research and youth-generated insights from the Delimi PROSPER Project, it highlights emerging risks, systemic gaps, and actionable policy options for decision-makers.

Evidence indicates that competition over land and environmental resources increasingly intersects with identity narratives, misinformation, climate stress, and economic exclusion. While security responses remain necessary, reactive measures alone have proven insufficient in preventing escalation or rebuilding trust at the community level.

Insights from youth participants reveal an additional dimension often underrepresented in formal policy discussions: the speed at which misinformation spreads locally, the depth of grievance linked to exclusion, and the importance of trusted community intermediaries in early prevention. Young women and persons with disabilities, in particular, provide nuanced observations on early warning signals and community trust dynamics.

This brief outlines practical policy options available to State institutions, emphasising preventive, inclusive, and evidence-driven engagement. It argues that structured youth participation, strengthened community dialogue mechanisms, and strategic digital counter-narratives are not peripheral interventions but central components of sustainable peace and governance in Kaduna State.

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Resource-based conflict continues to present significant challenges to peace, stability, and development in Kaduna State. Competition over land, grazing routes, water access, and agricultural livelihoods has become increasingly entangled with identity politics, historical grievances, economic stress, and the rapid circulation of misinformation through digital and informal networks.

Climate variability and environmental pressures have intensified these tensions, reshaping patterns of migration, settlement, and resource use. At the same time, economic hardship and youth unemployment have heightened vulnerability to divisive narratives and opportunistic mobilisation. In several instances, local disputes over resources have escalated quickly due to rumour amplification, mistrust, and delayed mediation.

Existing responses have often emphasised reactive or kinetic measures aimed at containing violence after escalation. While these interventions are critical for restoring order, they do not always address underlying drivers or prevent recurrence. Preventive and non-kinetic approaches, particularly those grounded in community trust, early warning, and inclusive dialogue, remain under-institutionalised.

Youth occupy a central position in this landscape. They are disproportionately affected by conflict, highly active in digital and social spaces, and deeply embedded within local networks of influence. Yet their perspectives are frequently absent from formal policy design and structured peace architecture.



Resource-based conflict continues to present significant challenges to peace, stability, and development in Kaduna State.



If current trends persist without strengthened preventive mechanisms, the risks include recurring cycles of mistrust, erosion of community cohesion, and increasing costs (both human and economic) associated with reactive responses.

Addressing resource-based conflict in Kaduna State, therefore, requires a shift from primarily reactive containment toward preventive, inclusive, and evidence-informed governance approaches.

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WHAT THE DATA SHOWS (EVIDENCE BASE)

SPRiNG-commissioned research across northern Nigeria highlights that resource-based conflict in Kaduna State is not driven by a single factor but by the convergence of environmental stress, governance gaps, livelihood pressures, and identity-based mobilisation.

Studies examining farmer–herder dynamics indicate that competition over land and grazing routes has intensified due to demographic growth, climate variability, and shifting settlement patterns. In several localities, disputes that initially emerge as economic or environmental disagreements rapidly acquire ethnic or religious dimensions, particularly where dispute-resolution mechanisms are weak or mistrusted.

Research on frontline justice and conflict-sensitive reform underscores the importance of accessible, community-level mediation structures. Where local institutions lack legitimacy, capacity, or neutrality, communities often resort to informal or reactive responses, increasing the likelihood of escalation. Delays in early intervention frequently allow rumours and grievances to harden into polarised narratives.

Data also shows that misinformation spreads through both digital platforms and informal networks, acting as an accelerant. Unverified claims about land encroachment, violence, or State bias can rapidly trigger retaliation cycles, especially in areas with historical grievances.

Importantly, research on social cohesion and the localisation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda demonstrates that inclusive peace

architecture strengthens resilience. Women’s networks, community associations, and trusted intermediaries often detect early warning signals before formal institutions do. However, these actors are rarely systematically integrated into State-level prevention strategies.

Additionally, evidence from SPRiNG-supported community-based trauma counselling initiatives further demonstrates the value of preventive, non-kinetic interventions. Under the FCDO-supported programme, 240 counsellors (including persons with disabilities) were trained in trauma-informed care, leading to the activation of 63 community and school-based listening centres across four states.

Across the research, one pattern is clear: reactive or kinetic responses may contain immediate violence, but without institutionalised preventive mechanisms (dialogue platforms, trusted mediation channels, inclusive governance frameworks, and community-informed early warning systems), conflict drivers persist.

These centres strengthened psychosocial resilience at community level, improved early identification of trauma triggers, and reduced escalation pathways linked to unresolved grievances. The findings reinforce that embedding psychosocial support within trusted community structures enhances stability, strengthens local legitimacy, and complements formal security measures.

The evidence, therefore, points to the strategic importance of structured, non-kinetic, and community-rooted approaches in reinforcing peace and stability in Kaduna State.



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WHAT THE YOUTH LENS ADDS

While existing research provides structural analysis, the Delimi PROSPER Project adds an operational dimension through youth-generated insights from Community Peacebuilding Workshops, Community of Practice engagements, digital advocacy platforms, and Peace Public Square discussions.

Youth participants consistently identify three critical dynamics:

- 1.** The speed and local credibility of misinformation. Participants note that false narratives often spread through trusted community channels (religious networks, WhatsApp groups, and local influencers) before official clarification can intervene. Young people describe how emotionally charged messages rapidly transform minor disputes into perceived collective threats.
- 2.** Exclusion as a grievance multiplier. Many youth express frustration not only with economic hardship but with limited participation in decision-making processes. They observe that when young people feel unheard, they become more susceptible to divisive mobilisation or disengagement from constructive dialogue.
- 3.** The power of informal intermediaries. Youth repeatedly highlight the role of respected local actors (Teachers, women leaders, traditional mediators, and faith figures) in

calming tensions before escalation. These individuals often operate outside formal security structures yet command deep trust.

Women and persons with disabilities within the project offer additional nuance. They identify subtle early warning signals, including shifts in language, market tensions, and patterns of community segregation, that precede visible violence.

Together, these lived experiences complement research findings by illustrating how structural drivers translate into everyday community dynamics, and how preventive engagement can be embedded locally before escalation occurs.



GENDER, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GEDSI) CONSIDERATIONS

Gender, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) dynamics significantly shape both conflict exposure and peacebuilding capacity in Kaduna State.

SPRING-supported interventions demonstrate that the impacts of conflict are unevenly distributed. Women often experience indirect and psychosocial consequences of violence, including trauma burdens, economic disruption, and caregiving strain. At the same time, women's community networks frequently serve as early-warning channels and informal mediation spaces.

Persons with disabilities face additional vulnerabilities during conflict episodes, particularly where mobility, information access, and protection mechanisms are limited. However, evidence from community-based trauma counselling initiatives shows that inclusion of persons with disabilities in service delivery roles strengthens legitimacy and accessibility.

Youth consultations within the Delimi PROSPER Project further reveal that exclusion, whether economic, generational, or identity-based, deepens grievance and increases susceptibility to divisive mobilisation. Preventive strategies that fail to integrate inclusive representation risk reinforcing marginalisation and undermining trust.

GEDSI-informed approaches, therefore, enhance both legitimacy and effectiveness. Integrating women's associations, youth networks, and disability leadership into preventive frameworks is not merely a compliance requirement but a strategic necessity for sustainable peace architecture.



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IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

The combined evidence and youth insights suggest several implications for State-level peace and security strategy in Kaduna.

1. Conflict prevention must be institutionalised, not episodic. Reactive responses remain necessary, but without structured preventive architecture (early warning mechanisms, community mediation platforms, trauma-informed support systems), drivers of escalation persist.
2. Trust is a security asset. Communities are more likely to cooperate with State institutions where dialogue channels are credible, inclusive, and locally anchored. Investment in non-kinetic mechanisms can therefore reduce pressure on kinetic interventions over time.

3. Misinformation must be treated as a conflict driver, not merely a communications challenge. Digital amplification of rumours accelerates escalation timelines, requiring proactive counter-narrative capacity and community verification mechanisms.
4. Psychosocial resilience directly influences stability. Unaddressed trauma can sustain grievance cycles across generations, whereas trauma-informed support enhances recovery and reduces vulnerability to mobilisation.

Failure to integrate preventive, inclusive, and youth-informed approaches risks reinforcing cycles of escalation and reactive containment. Conversely, embedding non-kinetic strategies within existing governance frameworks offers an opportunity to consolidate peace gains and strengthen state legitimacy.



POLICY OPTIONS AVAILABLE

The following policy options are available to Kaduna State institutions and partners:

Option 1: Institutionalise Community-Based Early Warning Mechanisms

Formalise collaboration between local leaders, youth networks, women's associations, and State security actors to create structured early warning and rapid response channels.

Benefit: Improves prevention timelines and trust.

Consideration: Requires clear coordination protocols and accountability safeguards.

Option 2: Strengthen Non-Kinetic Dialogue Platforms

Embed recurring State-supported dialogue forums at local and State levels that address resource disputes before escalation.

Benefit: Reduces reactive costs and enhances legitimacy.

Consideration: Must ensure inclusive representation and neutrality.

Option 3: Integrate Trauma-Informed Community Support

Expand community-based psychosocial support and listening centres, building on demonstrated SPRiNG models.

Benefit: Addresses grievance cycles and strengthens resilience.

Consideration: Requires trained personnel and referral systems.

Option 4: Support Youth-Led Digital Counter-Narratives

Partner with youth networks to identify and counter misinformation while amplifying positive, climate-conscious, and inclusive narratives.

Benefit: Slows escalation driven by rumour.

Consideration: Must avoid politicisation and ensure digital safety.

Option 5: Institutionalise GEDSI in Peace Architecture

Integrate gender, disability, and inclusion benchmarks into state peace and security frameworks.

Benefit: Enhances legitimacy, equity, and sustainability.

Consideration: Requires monitoring and performance indicators.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable peace in Kaduna State requires institutionalised preventive, non-kinetic governance approaches grounded in evidence and inclusion. Research findings and youth insights converge on the importance of structured early warning, trauma-informed resilience, digital narrative engagement, and inclusive dialogue architecture. Embedding these mechanisms within state frameworks strengthens legitimacy, reduces the risk of escalation, and reinforces long-term stability. These pathways offer practical, evidence-informed options for strengthening trust and resilience across Kaduna State.





Engaging Borders Strategy Research and Development (SRD)

Email: info@engagingborders.com

Website: www.engagingborders.com

Project Page: delimi.engagingborders.com